ARRI TECHNICAL NOTE P-1009

Video Display on Laptops
July 20, 2000

Summary

This note provides information on a product available in the US that allows the display and capture of video on Laptops.

Specifications

The Irez CapSure card is a PCMCIA card that displays 30 fps live video (NTSC, PAL & SECAM) at a maximum size of 640 x 480 pixels, with a bit depth of 256 colors (8 bit). It can also capture live video and freeze frames at "thousands of colors" (16 bit). It has an RCA connector for composite video and a Mini DIN 4 connector for S-Video (Y/C) input. It works with Mac and PC Laptops that have "Zoomed Video" capability (Mac: PowerBook 3400, 2400 and G3).

The CapSure card costs around US $130.

Video Display

Using a technology called "Zoomed Video", the card bypasses the Laptop's CPU, and sends the digitized video straight to the screen display circuitry. In our informal tests we found the quality of the zoomed video acceptable, especially given the card's low cost. We were positively surprised to see no image degradation with the display window expanded to its maximum size of 640 x 480 pixels. In addition we liked the fact that the video window's aspect ratio can be set by the user. This allows a de-squeezing of anamorphic video. If you are already using a Laptop on the set (with the Laptop Camera Controller (LCC), for instance), this card will be a great addition, allowing you to see the video assist on the same screen.

Video Capture

In addition to displaying live video, the card can capture live video or freeze frames.

The quality of the captured live video is dependent on the Laptops speed. The results reached with our PowerBook 3400 (200 MHz) was not very exiting, and this product will not replace video tape decks anytime soon. It might be useful for preview or reference purposes, especially since the material is captured as a standard QuickTime movie, and can thus easily be manipulated with any of the available QuickTime tools.

The quality of captured freeze frames is somewhat better, especially if done at full screen size. This might be useful for the DP or the continuity department.

Contact Information

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